Former US President Theodore Roosevelt was once quoted as saying: “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”

Across our University, we find so many examples of people doing “work worth doing”. We have researchers who are seeking to change our understanding of life and make a real impact upon society; we have those working to build links with our communities, creating opportunity, jobs, and championing social inclusion; we have great ambassadors who represent the University on important public bodies; and those who are committed to creating a student experience at Plymouth of which we can be proud.

In this second issue of CONNECT, you will, I hope, find evidence of all of the above – from our feature on what makes Plymouth such a sustainable university, our work at the Tremough Innovation Centre in Cornwall, the launch of an exciting new research institute dedicated to health and communities, and much more besides.

And sometimes, when a prize does come along, well that needs to be celebrated too, especially when it is as prestigious as a Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education. The University’s invitation to Buckingham Palace is our cover story, and you can read more about it from page 4.

Enjoy the issue.

Andrew Merrington
Editor
**NEWS**

“The Queen’s Anniversary Prize is a very rare accolade, and it distinguishes us amongst our peers. We all felt tremendously proud of our University, and really excited about what this means for us.”

Professor Wendy Purcell
Vice-Chancellor

**A ROYAL SEAL OF APPROVAL**

It is the highest national award that can be bestowed upon an educational institution. The Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education is an integral part of the annual honours system, and is only awarded every two years to a handful of universities and colleges.

And so it was that on 25 February, 2012, Vice-Chancellor Professor Wendy Purcell accepted the prestigious accolade from Her Majesty The Queen in recognition of Plymouth University’s expertise in marine and maritime education.

Professor Purcell attended Buckingham Palace with several invited guests, including Pro-Chancellor Barbara Bond MBE, and students and staff from the Marine Institute. As part of the presentation the institute’s director, Professor Martin Attrill, received a commemorative certificate from HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

Professor Purcell said: “The Queen’s Anniversary Prize is a very rare accolade, and it distinguishes us amongst our peers. We all felt tremendously proud of our University, and really excited about what this means for us.

“The Queen was gracious and congratulated us on our 150th Anniversary – and The Duke of Edinburgh even took time to speak to each of our students, and expressed particular interest in our cuttlefish research!”

Harry Reynolds (third year Ocean Yachting), Katherine Harris (third year Merchant Shipping), Alexandra Colbing (second year Marine Biology and Coastal Ecology), Isobel Bloor (PhD student), and graduate Sophie Cousens made up the student delegation.

Harry said: “It was a great honour to be asked to represent the University for such a high profile event. It isn’t every
day you get invited to the palace to meet The Queen, let alone on behalf of your university.”

Alexandra described it as “truly an experience like no other”, while Isobel said: “This is great external recognition for the marine and maritime research produced by the University, and acknowledges the hard work, dedication and pride that our students and staff invest in it.”

A reception at the Guildhall, in London, preceded the awards ceremony, and was attended by HRH The Princess Royal and senior figures in the HE sector, including Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts MP.

Dr Andrew Eccleston, of the School of Marine Science and Engineering, said: “The Guildhall banquet with our invited guests and the Buckingham Palace ceremony were spectacular events, but importantly for me it was also the opportunity to re-connect with key players in the UK shipping industry and once again see Plymouth recognised as a global leader in maritime education. For this to happen in the year of The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, when we also celebrate the 150th Anniversary since the founding of the School of Navigation in Plymouth, is quite literally a majestic achievement!”

Professor Deborah Greaves, also of the School of Marine Science and Engineering, added: “It’s great for Plymouth to receive the award in this special year when we celebrate our 150th birthday and open the new Marine Building, with its world-class facilities.”

With the award for 2012, Plymouth joins a select handful of universities to have won more than once – following on from a 1994 Queen’s Anniversary Prize in recognition of widening participation.

Professor Purcell said: “We have a proud legacy and an immensely exciting future ahead of us. We lead the sector in terms of sustainability and business engagement, and we have world-class research and teaching right across the institution. So let’s win another!”
A conference which showcased research from fields as diverse as mental health, cultural integration, and alcohol consumption, proved a perfect public launch pad for the University’s newest multidisciplinary institute.
“We’ll be running regular seminar series and organising events and activities for IHC postgraduates and early career researchers, and we’ll provide pump-priming grants for members to support research and innovation.”

Professor Gayle Letherby
Director of the Institute of Health and Community

The Institute of Health and Community, in the words of Director Professor Gayle Letherby, provides a framework for the University to focus its research and professional activity across the spectrum of health and medical sciences, the humanities and cultural studies.

Hosted within the Faculty of Health, Education and Society, and already boasting members from the Plymouth Business School, the Faculty of Arts, and the Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, the IHC spans a wide range of areas, from travel and tourism, to cultural difference and globalisation; ageing and rural issues, to drug and alcohol research.

Speaking after the inaugural conference, Gayle said the event had provided a great opportunity to begin the process of engaging external partners and stakeholders in the knowledge exchange and workforce development opportunities available.

She said: ‘The institute aims to play its part in ‘Shaping Health and Communities’ locally and globally through its extensive research in the broad areas of culture, society, health care and research methods. With research of national and international renown and significance, the creation of the institute gives new focus to existing work and provides the opportunity and impetus for enterprising partnerships and entrepreneurial innovation with the private sector.”

Three associated research centres have been created at the outset, with the promise of more to follow. The Centre for Culture, Community and Society (CCCS) will explore and address some of the key challenges facing culture and community in the 21st century, including: nanotechnologies; social networks; power, elites and class; and sustainability, tourism, and culture and learning.

The Centre for Health and Social Care Innovation (CHeSCI) will look to take a multidisciplinary and multi-professional approach to addressing challenges in health and social care, creating research clusters around applied health genetics; clinical skills innovation; dietetics and health; e-health; and human movement and function. While the Centre for Methodological Innovations (CMI) is concerned with both qualitative and quantitative methods, methodology, and epistemology in health, education, and social research. The CMI has grown from a well-established group – in fact members of CMI established the Methodological Innovations Online journal back in 2006 – and an annual conference is already planned for May.

Gayle said: “We’ll be running regular seminar series and organising events and activities for IHC postgraduates and early career researchers, and we’ll provide pump-priming grants for members to support research and innovation.

“There is also a tremendous opportunity to build innovative partnerships based around areas such as knowledge transfer, services, facilities and workforce development. For example, we can provide consultancy for partners who are looking to resolve specific short-term issues or undertake strategic developmental projects, and look to develop their capabilities.

“We can also take advantage of assets such as the Human Movement and Function Laboratory, or the Optometry Research Laboratory, to develop links with clinical and commercial clients.”

The inaugural conference, held at the Best Western Duke of Cornwall Hotel, Plymouth, featured a number of papers and presentations, including Dr Julia Morgan’s research on support offered to children who had a parent in prison; Dr Avril Bellinger’s work with START – Students and Refugees Together; Associate Professor Adrian Barton’s analysis of the shift towards ‘pre-loading alcohol’ and its effect on the Plymouth night-time economy; and Dr Jane Grose’s work on waste and recycling in healthcare.

For more information on the IHC, visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/ihc
“Plymouth University is at the forefront of providing environmental safety information on nanomaterials and we are one of the lead European laboratories advising people around the world,” Professor Richard Handy explains – and he should know.

Director of the Ecotoxicology Research and Innovation Centre (ERIC) on campus, Richard has devoted the last seven years to the science of the microscopically small, and it seems his hard work is paying off as the University and city is developing an international reputation in this complex field.

Nanoscience involves studying matter on an ultra-small scale – one nanometre is one-millionth of a millimetre and a single human hair is around 80,000 nanometres wide. The technology stretches across the whole spectrum of science, touching medicine, biology, physics, engineering and chemistry.

With very significant economic impact, nanotechnology is a growing industry worldwide. Key to its long-term growth and sustainability is establishing confidence that technologies developed are safe.

Richard explains: “The nanomaterial work we are doing looks at a new group of compounds with unusual physical and chemical properties at the nanoscale, and their environmental hazards. This information is then used for environmental risk assessments and especially by the European Commission to help make these materials safe.

“The same concerns on the effects of substances on the environment, such as aquatic organisms and wildlife, go too for human health.”

Nanoparticles are being introduced into many everyday products, including cosmetics, sunscreens, fabrics and electronics. But with no nanoscale-specific regulations, it begs the question of whether human health can be affected by their use.

And that’s where Richard and his team come in, looking at the behaviour of particles and their benefits and limitations to health and the environment.

Richard has been involved in environmental toxicology for 25 years. The work into nanotechnology began in 2005 and the laboratory on campus was the first in the UK to receive a grant for environmental research in this area. There are now approximately 13 staff and students carrying out significant work.

In its latest project, ERIC is working alongside 47 European partners in a study funded by the European Commission looking at managing the risks of engineered nanoparticles.

He continues: “Up until fairly recently all safety legislation was about dealing with the chemical substances and what they are made of. What’s different about nanomaterials is we’re suddenly concerned about not just the chemical formula, but also its shape and size. For example both carbon nanotubes and the graphite you find in a pencil are made of carbon, but their toxicity and hazards are very different.”

Richard has written documents for the European Union on health effects of particles, advised countries on environmental safety and governments on setting up research programmes, including the US National Nanoscience Initiative for the Office of the President of the United States.

Nanotechnology research is still in its early stages, but already scientists are identifying effects. Richard has already
“The estimated value of the industry is $1.5 trillion by 2015, which is why we have to get the health and safety and environmental issues right. It’s a question of responsible innovation to make sure particles are safe for humans and the environment.”

found that nanoparticles have a detrimental effect on the brain and other parts of the central nervous system of animals. Further new research will be revealed at the international conference series Environmental Effects of Nanoparticles and Nanomaterials in Canada this September. Richard established the conference series in 2006 and it is now one of the main international events for the nanoscience community.

Back at Plymouth, investigations are underway to see whether nanotechnology could be introduced to enhance medical products. A PhD student and a post-doctoral researcher are working with the Peninsula Dental School to see if materials can enhance the strength of fillings and prevent infections.

“So far we’ve looked at antibacterial products and how nanomaterials interact with the surface of teeth. We’re also exploring dental reconstructive surgery, seeing whether nanomaterials can improve prosthetics’ attachment and durability. This also includes colour matching and exploiting the optical properties of the materials to help patients’ wellbeing,” Richard says.

With a new science comes the need to train new scientists and to that end, ERIC welcomed students from across Europe in January for the first nano winter training school.

If estimations are anything to go by, the nanotechnology industry is set to boom. Richard concludes: “The estimated value of the industry is $1.5 trillion by 2015, which is why we have to get the health and safety and environmental issues right. It’s a question of responsible innovation to make sure particles are safe for humans and the environment.

“Plymouth is internationally placed to be involved in this industry as it evolves.”

For more information visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/eric
For the past eight years, photography lecturer Stephen Vaughan has been researching and documenting some of the most geologically active areas in the world. His fascination with framing landscapes on the edge of the tectonic plates – from the empty grandeur of Iceland, to the bustling hubbub of Tokyo – has defined his recent work with large format photography. And so it was that in March of 2011, as he looked to finish a project two years in the making, Stephen found himself at the scene of one of the worst natural disasters in Japan’s history.

Recounting his story of the 9.0-Richter scale magnitude megathrust earthquake, Stephen said: “I had been planning to photograph sites that had been hit by a tsunami in 1700, working from accounts found in historical Japanese texts. I had only been in Tokyo for two days when it happened; I was packing my cameras away after photographing the Tokyo Sky Tree when I felt the Earth start to shake. The ground took on this incredible, fluid nature, which is hard to describe.

“It took me a couple of seconds to comprehend what was happening, and it was only when I noticed that people were panicking around me that reality dawned – this was a big earthquake.”

It was the sight of two huge cranes teetering on the edge of the building above him that finally gave Stephen the impulse to move, and, with transport systems down, he had to walk for nine hours across the city in order to get back to his hotel. At one point he did try to catch a train and ended up standing for an hour-and-a-half in a packed underground carriage – an ordeal that would have been claustrophobic enough without the added pain of him slipping a disk in his back!

Five days later, Stephen was evacuated, but he immediately negotiated with the University to be allowed to return, and with some stringent insurance conditions in place, flew back to Japan to continue his work.

Travelling by train and then hire car, Stephen reached Miyako on the north coast of Iwate, the area that had been hit by the deadly tsunami. Using the town as a base, he reached out to record some of the most tragic – and surreal – sights in places such as Otsuchi, Kuwagasaki and Kamaishi.

He said: “It was like driving into an apocalypse. Imagine a stretch of coast running from Dover to Falmouth, and for miles and miles it is just complete and utter destruction... it defied belief. Virtually the only people around were members of the Japanese Army and Red Cross who were conducting the rescue and clean-up operation.”

The moral and ethical implications of his work were uppermost in Stephen’s mind, and he was keen to give back

“It took me a couple of seconds to comprehend what was happening, and it was only when I noticed that people were panicking around me that reality dawned – this was a big earthquake.”
to the aid effort, volunteering with the YMCA in Miyako, as well as spending time with survivors in the rescue shelters.

He said: “The people were so dignified and strong, it was a truly humbling experience. I have been sending pictures back to some of the families I met.”

His images will be exhibited at the European Geoscience Assembly in Vienna later this year, where he will deliver a conference paper. He has also been nominated for a prestigious Prix Pictet award.

Stephen, who joined the University in 2007 after a 20-year career as a commercial photographer, is also talking to Professor Iain Stewart about an interdisciplinary project in Turkey and Greece, which will look at the relationship between areas of seismic activity and ancient cultures and temples.

He said: “I am fascinated by the way that mankind has tried to mitigate natural disasters, and I use landscape photography to capture the invisible and underlying threat – evoking a sense of tension, embedded within the picture. I am not interested in taking ‘news pictures’ – I want my images to contribute to a wider geological, cultural and historical record. By using the arts as a medium to communicate science, it is my hope that we can reach a broader audience.”
You’ve been here now for just over six months. How have you settled in?

Well, time certainly flies when you’re run off your feet. I’ve never really stopped. When I arrived, so many people came up to me and said “we’ve been waiting for you to come” – in a good way I hasten to add. I used to get that all the time. There were so many enquiries coming into the University which people didn’t know what to do with. Now people have a name they can contact and things just keep flying into my in-tray.

How had your previous work prepared you for your current role?

I have been working in the maritime sector all of my life, ever since I graduated from the former Royal Naval Engineering College here in Plymouth. I worked as a navigator on submarines for 12 years before leaving the Navy in 2000, and then ran a variety of marine-related businesses. The University wanted someone with a plethora of contacts in the industry and everything I had done pointed in the right direction, although I have to admit I haven’t actually had to go looking for business that much. The University is such a huge place, it already has a great network of contacts in the marine sector and the level of support being given by the Vice-Chancellor and senior managers towards expanding it is fantastic.

You’ve worked mostly in the commercial sector, how does working at the University differ?

In the past, people have maybe not seen universities as having business potential, but that has certainly changed in recent years. I also think it is safe to say that not every academic works in a way that is compatible with the demands of the business sector. I try and manage the expectations of the two. For example, 40South Energy Ltd, who recently signed up to become the first tenants of the new Marine Building, said they wanted to arrange a Skype meeting. Now, to a businessman, giving us ‘plenty of notice’ is 24 hours, but if an academic is teaching that is not always possible. I found a way to get the two to sit down and talk and, in this instance, it ultimately proved a success.

How do you spend the majority of your time?

Principally, my role is about making the business community aware of the University’s marine assets. That ranges from promoting our research expertise to highlighting the facilities and technology we have to offer. One example was just before Christmas when we hired out our ROV – a remotely operated mini-submarine – to a production company for a documentary they were making in Lyme Bay. As a result, we hope our sub will be appearing on television in the not-too-distant future.

“We hired out our ROV to a production company for a documentary they were making in Lyme Bay. As a result, we hope our sub will be appearing on television in the not too distant future.”
What is the initiative you are most looking forward to over the coming months?

The new Marine Building – which is due for completion later this year – is undoubtedly right up there. That is going to provide the University with a world-class facility and there is a huge amount of interest in it, from at home and abroad. The wave tanks in particular are going to be a fantastic asset.

It certainly seems a busy role – but a challenging and exciting one as well?

Sometimes I think I could have a full-time job with one of the areas I cover, let alone the other seven. But the marine sector at the University is developing all the time and things are only going to get busier over the next couple of years. Attracting students is going to become more and more difficult, so we have to start shouting about the things we excel in. There is certainly a lot to do, but we have a huge amount of expertise and potential on campus and now is the time to make the most of it.

Tell us something about yourself that staff at the University might not know.

My favourite hobby is wild swimming, which is swimming outdoors in rivers, lakes and the sea. I especially like to go for a swim in the sea at Tinside, off the Hoe, at lunchtimes... but only during the summer months!
Soil Association
healthy soil, healthy people, healthy planet
Support a farm and receive a share of the harvest
Community Supported Agriculture
When Plymouth University picked up the 2011 Green Gown Award for ‘Institutional Change – Continuous Improvement’ in November, it did so with a ringing endorsement from the judges.

“The tricameral approach embracing University research, teaching and operations, is a powerful, holistic and systematic approach which has embraced staff, students, estates, curriculum and community well after external funding has ceased,” they said.

“The University has found its place as a catalyst for change in the city and region. Coupled with its commitment to sharing its growing institutional intelligence regarding the embedding of sustainability, the Plymouth experience is highly relevant and transferable to the sector.”

Over the course of the next four pages, we meet some of the people who have helped develop our award-winning reputation, and look at what is in store for the future.

JENNY BUSHROD, Director of the Office of Procurement and Sustainability (pictured above), has LIFE on her mind – Learning in Future Environments to be precise. The new standard for measuring the sustainability of higher education institutions, replacing Universities that Count, will be used by Plymouth to develop and submit its first self-assessment to the scheme in May.
Every participating university will be judged against frameworks which elaborate four key themes – Leadership and Governance; Partnership and Engagement; Estates and Operations; and Teaching, Learning and Development – with the changes designed to make LiFE more appropriate for HE institutions and their individual strategies.

As Jenny explains, this shift in emphasis mirrors the work already underway at Plymouth: “Sustainability is not just about the environment – it incorporates financial and social responsibility as well,” she said. “The decisions we make must take them all into account, and there is an intricate tension in getting that balance right. So at Plymouth, we take a holistic view, working together across procurement and sustainability, research, and the curriculum. We call it a ‘tricameral approach to the triple bottom line’. And by signing up to LiFE, we will be able to better assess our progress and benchmark ourselves against the sector.”

With serial success in the People and Planet Green League – including a number one ranking in 2010 – and the holder of ISO14000:1 accreditation and Fairtrade status, the University has been well-recognised for its commitment to sustainability thus far. But with the new strategic emphasis on the tricameral approach, there is a sense of the institution pushing on into new territory.

The direction has been set by the Sustainability Executive Group (SEG) – an interdisciplinary team which includes members of the Office of Procurement and Sustainability, the Centre for Sustainable Futures and the new Institute for Sustainability Solutions Research (ISSR), as well as student representatives and staff from External Relations and Communication Services. Under the leadership of Professor David Wheeler, and with the guidance of an OVC Advisory Group, which includes external partners, the SEG has helped to reposition sustainability as one of the University’s ‘Super KPIs’ and transition it from five years’ worth of CETL funding.

And it becomes abundantly clear that, while each area has a specific focus – operations, curriculum and research accordingly – there is a huge amount of synergy and cross-fertilisation taking place. As Jenny said: “We are looking to enrich our operational strategies – whether carbon management, food, travel or water – with ISSR’s research. And through our management of the campus, we are looking to provide learning opportunities for our students, working with them as partners.”

Indeed, students from the School of Architecture, Design and Environment have played a key role in conducting research to inform the Space Strategy, and there are plans to roll out a smartphone app that will enable students to take pictures of what Jenny describes as ‘good or bad use of space’. Engineering and surveying students have been involved with the construction of the new Marine Building, while others have helped with an arts inventory and a project to review the leases on all University properties.

Paul Lumley, the University’s Energy and Environmental Manager, even provides tours of the campus plant rooms for students – all part of an increased awareness of the experiential learning opportunities available.

Similarly the new Green Travel Plan, due to be launched imminently, was worked upon by the Centre for Sustainable Transport, along with Plymouth City Council and the Students’ Union; and the ISSR supported the successful £960,000 bid to HEFCE’s Revolving Green Fund for a grant to develop an IT-integrated smart building management system.

“The brand has never been truer,” said Jenny. “We have a strong culture of partnership working and we understand that our strength in sustainability is so much more than a sum of the parts.”

**THIS ETHOS** of partnership sits at the heart of the Institute for Sustainability Solutions Research – a network of around 200 academics drawn from across the institution. Managed by Paul Hardman, with the support of a team that includes Professor Chris Balch and Tim Daley, both of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, the ISSR will look to focus on ‘real world’ challenges, and pull together teams of experts to meet them head on.

Paul said: “The ISSR will build on the success and outstanding reputation that Plymouth University’s researchers have enjoyed in the past. We are looking to catalyse relationships and pull together on bid opportunities across a range of areas such as sustainable transport, international development, climate change and low carbon development. What makes the institute different is its commitment to solutions-based outputs, solutions that
“What makes the institute different is its commitment to solutions-based outputs, solutions that we hope will make a real difference to society.”

Paul Hardman
Manager of ISSR

We hope will make a real difference to society.”

Having had a ‘soft launch’ last September (with a more high profile public launch due to take place in the coming weeks), ISSR has hit the ground running. It is working on a range of projects including the creation of South West Smart Applications Ltd – the Vice-Chancellor’s Enterprise Award-winning company that hosts the technology behind the smart ticketing infrastructure being used by transport operators and local authorities to create an ‘Oyster card’ for the region.

Further afield, the ISSR has been working with the Department for International Development (DFID), Enterprise Educators UK and our own Plymouth Business School to deliver training to budding entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The project – part of the YouWin programme run by the Nigerian government – has resulted in some 6,000 entrepreneurs receiving business planning advice, and Plymouth academics travelling to Lagos to conduct the necessary quality assessments.

Paul said: “These projects not only demonstrate the breadth of our offer, but also the international opportunities that are available to academics who want to become involved. It also shows the first-class reputation that Plymouth enjoys – the DFID project originated from them approaching us!”

The ISSR is currently investigating another business sustainability project, this time in East Africa, and is also looking to engage stakeholders closer to home through New Horizons, a series of reports aimed at practitioners in the sector. The launch issue, The Big Society and The Environment: Better Together, has been written by Roger Higman and Rory Shand, and details the reception of the government’s Big Society agenda among the leaders of the country’s environmental non-governmental organisations. Future editions will cover topics such as sustainable transport, health, and waste.

Paul, who joined the University in September 2011 from the South West Regional Development Agency, after previous experience in the renewable energy sector, added: “I knew that Plymouth had a great reputation for sustainability, but it is only when you meet the people that you begin to appreciate the strength, depth and breadth of this expertise. This is a university that is serious about ‘walking the talk’ whether that is in research, operations or teaching.”

This kind of ambassadorial role is something that Professor Stephen Sterling has also been accustomed to in recent years. As Director of the Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF), Stephen has not just supported the embedding of sustainability across the Plymouth curriculum, but has helped the wider sector to engage with it as well.

It is here that the notion of ‘sharing institutional intelligence’, commented upon by the Green Gown Awards, is evidenced most clearly. For example, for the past two years Stephen has been leading a project for the Higher Education Academy that will produce a ‘how to’ guide entitled The Future Fit Framework: An Introductory Guide to Teaching and Learning for Sustainability in HE. However, the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), aimed to raise awareness, share practice from across the world and motivate leaders on the need for cultural change in institutions across France.

That reputation was recently demonstrated when UNESCO invited Vice-Chancellor Professor Wendy Purcell to provide a keynote address on sustainability to an international audience at their HQ in Paris. The event, which was also attended by
“Plymouth enjoys this fantastic reputation for sustainability both here and internationally, and we know that some students choose us with this in mind. So it is important that we provide them with the opportunities to engage – we want to be producing sustainability-literate graduates.”

Professor Stephen Sterling
Director of the Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF)

“The question of how to engage with sustainability is a very common one, and this guide looks at issues such as resourcing, pedagogic barriers and motivation and delivers bite-sized chunks of advice,” Stephen said.

2012 will also see the release of The Sustainable University: Exploring Principles and Practice, the second key text that Stephen has edited, following 2010’s acclaimed Sustainability Education – Perspectives and Practice across Higher Education, which featured Plymouth authors. The new project has brought together 18 UK and international institutions with the aim of taking forward debate and practice with regard to institutional engagement in sustainability. Stephen has also acted as a ‘critical friend’ to the HEA’s Green Academy, and is regularly asked to give keynotes on sustainability education and the Plymouth experience to international conferences.

But as Stephen says, it is not just about giving people the answers. He said: “This whole area of learning and pedagogy is necessarily active and participatory. Sustainability has controversial aspects; it’s multi-faceted and complex and demands critical thinking. Plymouth has been leading the way in exploring these issues, and as an institution it is clear that over recent years we’ve gone through a culture shift: we are now widely regarded as being at the forefront of the sector in this regard.”

At the forefront we may be, but CSF is not content to rest on its laurels. It has recently launched a bespoke service that engages with University schools to help embed sustainability into their courses, and has recently completed a pilot project with the Plymouth Business School, in which a major audit of all of its courses has been conducted and links forged with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. CSF has also been working with Geography student Sarah Jackson (pictured) to create a new interactive student handbook, which contains information...
on food, energy, accommodation and transport – and how students can become involved with sustainability-related initiatives at the University. And in conjunction with Paul Lumley, Stephen has also been liaising with Carbon Visuals over the creation of striking imagery that communicates issues around carbon footprint.

Stephen said: “Plymouth enjoys this fantastic reputation for sustainability both here and internationally, and we know that some students choose us with this in mind. So it is important that we provide them with the opportunities to engage – we want to be producing sustainability-literate graduates.”

**TOGETHER**, the work of the SEG has been reflected in this year’s Sustainability Report – the most comprehensive document of its type yet produced by the University. And it is one which contains commentary from external stakeholders, reflecting the open stance that the institution adopts – not just in terms of working with partners through the likes of the Plymouth Food Charter, Sell2Plymouth, and ISSR, but also in inviting feedback and acting upon it.

“It is about students, staff, and community partners working together,” said Professor Wendy Purcell, Vice-Chancellor. “Other institutions can claim to have the constituent parts, but what makes us distinctive is that we work to bring these together across the University. To embed sustainability, I think it’s essential that we work across boundaries so that, over time, there are no silos. We won the Green Gown Award for our work to turn our ambitions into actions. And we now have the opportunity to share our learning with others so that we can help shape how the sector moves forward, as it must.”

If you would like to find out more about how the University engages with sustainability, go to www.plymouth.ac.uk/sustainability
THE TREMOUGH INNOVATION CENTRE: LOOKING TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR BUSINESS

Richard Snell
Take a tour around the Tremough Innovation Centre (TIC) in Cornwall and it’s impossible not to sense the air of optimism and excitement that pervades the cutting-edge £13 million facility.

From the building itself, which has been stylishly and intelligently designed to encourage communal gathering and networking, to the fibre optic digital nerve-centre that will create a competitive edge for tenants, it is clear that TIC, if you’ll pardon the pun, means business. And that is an attitude shared by the on-site University management team, who, grounded in the success of the sister centre at Pool, are providing a thoughtful, and tailored service for clients.

TIC, the second of the three Cornwall Council-owned Innovation Centres funded by Convergence investment, opened its doors on February 1st with a remit to support and nurture businesses in the creative, environmental and digital media sectors. Already it is home to more than 15 companies, ranging from a rainforest preservation social enterprise to an ex-Aardman animation consultant.

Richard Snell, Centre Manager, told CONNECT: “TIC is a fantastic resource for Cornwall – beautiful, sustainable, with high-tech conference facilities – and we want to instil that sense of pride and confidence into our clients. As we’ve seen already from the Pool Innovation Centre (PIC), having this kind of base can make a huge difference to tenants when it comes to pitching for business and winning clients.”

Indeed, a recently released tenant survey confirmed the positive effects for businesses being based at PIC, with more than 40 jobs created, a further 16 safeguarded, and improved levels of turnover and confidence also recorded. It is a benchmark that Richard is keen to emulate.

He said: “It is not enough to be merely reactive to our tenants’ needs – we take a proactive stance, encouraging them to work with our entrepreneur-in-residence and set goals and objectives for themselves. We carry out a diagnostic on every business that moves in to see how we can support their development, and help them to ‘work smarter’.

“Maybe they need some advice on how to manage cash flow; or guidance on invoicing; or perhaps they need information on grants available to them. Our role is to hook in the help they need from the academic community at Plymouth and on the adjacent Tremough campus, or from the wider business community.”

Richard, himself a former SME entrepreneur and graduate of Plymouth University, is building links within both the Combined Universities of Cornwall, as well as with business networks in Falmouth and the region.

He said: “This is a resource for the community, and that includes graduates, local authorities, the Chamber of Commerce, and local groups and organisations. We have an open door policy – and that extends to our colleagues at Plymouth. If you are looking to connect with people in Cornwall, TIC and PIC are open to you.”

With 70 offices and several boardrooms – all of which boast a state-of-the-art, multi-platform, video conferencing system that is found at just one other venue in Europe – TIC still has plenty of room for break-out space; a vital resource so that, in Richard’s words, clients can learn by osmosis.

The centre is also a model of sustainability: constructed entirely from Cornish materials, it is powered by a biomass boiler, has rainwater capture tanks, and is capable of self-venting to regulate temperature.

That commitment to the green agenda extends outwards – visitors, for example, are encouraged to catch the train to Penryn station, where they can download an app (designed by graduate business and Formation Zone tenants Mutant Labs) that provides maps and local transport links for their smartphone.

It all adds up to an innovative centre that is thoroughly in tune with its surroundings, and the strategic direction of the University, the county, and the region.
CONSUMER LAW EXPERT PETER SHEARS ELECTED TO WHICH?

Peter Shears, our Professor of Consumer Law and Policy in the School of Law, has recently been elected onto the governing body of the Consumers Association, better known as Which? The organisation, which was set up more than 50 years ago, has grown to become the largest consumer watchdog in the UK, with a portfolio of magazines under its belt. It is governed by a council of 12 elected and six co-opted members.

Peter said: “After over 30 years’ activity in Consumer Law and Policy, I am both delighted and flattered to have been elected by more than 20,000 members of the Consumers Association. I hope that my contribution on their governing council will reflect well upon our School Faculty and University. Beyond that, I’m dead chuffed to have realised a personal ambition!”

ANDY DELIVERS PROFESSORIAL LECTURE 2.0

Andy Phippen, of the Plymouth Business School, delivered his professorial lecture in January, exploring issues such as the online behaviour of children, and the role of universities in public engagement and the communication of research. Our Professor of Social Responsibility in IT has become a leading national commentator in the field and was part of a panel of experts providing advice on the BBC website on Safer Internet Day.

Andy also took part in a public debate at the Plymouth-hosted version of the event, which was pulled together by the University’s School of Computing and Mathematics. He said: “This year’s Safer Internet Day has been the best ever and it is great to see Plymouth University making a major contribution at a national and regional level. Shirley Atkinson and Professor Steve Furnell, along with a number of our students, have done a terrific job speaking to Plymouth children of all ages, as well as many adults, about how to use the internet positively and safely.”

ROYAL SOCIETY RECOGNITION FOR LISA

Dr Lisa Bunn, a post doctoral Research Fellow in the School of Health Professions, has been awarded the Royal Society of Medicine’s Gordon Holmes Prize. The prize is for all trainees in neurosciences including neurology, neurosurgery, neurophysiology, neuropathology or neuroradiology.

Lisa was shortlisted from a wide field and was invited to present her paper – Processing vestibular, proprioceptive and visual information for balance control in pure cerebellar disease – against four neurosurgeons at an event at the Royal Society of Medicine in London, in March. Speaking of Lisa’s success, Professor Graham Sewell, Head of School, said: “It was a great achievement just to make the shortlist, but to win against that calibre of competition was fantastic.”
MARINE GRANTS CONTINUE TO FLOW

The tide of success for researchers in the Marine Institute has continued unabated, with several new notable funding grants. Dr Phil Hosegood from the Marine Physics Research Group (MPRG), in the School of Marine Science and Engineering, has just been awarded £470k by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) as the lead investigator of a £1.2m Standard Grant. SMILES (Surface Mixed Layer Evolution at Submesoscales) will be a partnership with Plymouth Marine Laboratory, the University of Cambridge and the British Antarctic Survey, examining the role of a particular class of upper ocean dynamics called submesoscales. Phil will lead the three-year project that combines ship-based observations with extensive numerical modelling, and as part of that, will undertake a 30-day voyage to the Sub-Antarctic Front in the Southern Ocean, 200 miles south of the Falkland Islands.

In addition, Dr Maeve Lohan, from the Biogeochemistry and Environmental Analytical Chemistry (BEACh) group in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, has been working with Dr Alex Nimmo Smith and Dr Hosegood again on a £125k grant from NERC. The project, entitled Seasonal controls on shelf-edge nutrient fluxes at the Malin Shelf, will utilise novel chemical sensors mounted on autonomous underwater gliders to quantify the exchange of nutrients between the deep ocean and shallow coastal waters.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR UNIVERSITY RESEARCH NETWORK

A research network that unites students and academics across the globe has won an international award. The Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Integrative Arts (CAiiA), otherwise known as the Planetary Collegium, has been awarded the 2011 World Universities Forum Award for Best Practice in Higher Education.

The unique PhD network brings together researchers involved in the practice and theory of new media art, both online and in face-to-face sessions and conferences all over the world. Roy Ascott, Professor of Technoetic Arts in the University’s School of Art and Media, and founding president of the Planetary Collegium, said: “Having conversations with innovative researchers all over the world is as satisfying and nourishing today as it was when I established the programme almost 20 years ago, and it is great that it has been recognised in this way.”

CALIFORNIA DREAMING FOR ACCLAIMED MEDIA ARTS FILM

A documentary short film from Associate Lecturer in Media Arts Amanda Bluglass, and second year Media Arts student Danny Cooke, has been screened at a prestigious festival in the US. Ray: A Life Underwater was shown at the San Francisco Ocean Festival in March, following tremendous success since its release.

The film won the overall festival and audience choice prize at the 2011 Shoot Film Festival, and the Award for Best Documentary at the Super Shorts International Film Festival in London in December. BBC News has also featured the film, and it has attracted global interest with internet hits topping 200,000. If you would like to see the film, visit www.rayalifeunderwater.co.uk
IN MEMORY OF DR COLIN WILLIAMS

From his family roots on a council estate in Newport, to his position as Dean of one of the country’s most respected University partner college networks, it was entirely fitting that Dr Colin Williams should have lived and championed the ethos of widening participation in education.

It follows, that his sudden death at the age of 64, has shocked and touched many people in the sector, from those who experienced his passion for geology to those who shared his values of social mobility through learning.

In his role as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty, Dr Williams oversaw its growth in both size and stature to the point where it now encompasses 19 institutions across South West England, with nearly 10,000 students able to access higher education locally.

Born in 1948, Colin spent much of his early years in and out of hospital, undergoing a number of operations on an orthopaedic condition. His early career was a colourful one, working in the music scene as a gig promoter, before he headed overseas to forge his way in the oil industry in Tunisia and South America.

Colin’s passion for rock music was matched by that of ‘rock science’, and so he enrolled at Plymouth University as a mature student in geology. He went on to complete a Masters in Marine Earth Sciences at University College London, and then a PhD back in Plymouth, in which he produced a thesis on the stratigraphy of the Upper Greensand Formation of South West England.

He became a part-time lecturer at Plymouth, and in 1994 was awarded a one-year research fellowship. During that time he contributed to a number of publications on microfossils. Soon after he was awarded a full-time contract and by 1996 was programme leader for geology. He maintained strong links with the off-shore industry sector and until the early years of the millennium was still working as a consultant for several oil companies.

His passion for widening participation saw him follow one of his geology mentors, Ian Tunbridge, into the newly-formed University Partner College Faculty in 2003, and he was appointed Executive Dean in 2008, overseeing a network that stretches from Bristol to Penzance, via Jersey.

Jim Griffiths, Head of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, paid tribute to his dear friend. He said: “He was completely committed to the partner college concept. For him education was a way out and he wanted everyone to have that opportunity.

“He was passionate about his subject, and passionate about widening participation. He came from a council estate and was a firm believer in the value of education as a means for people to get on in life.”

Colin was never happier than when he was conducting fieldwork, and was described by Professor Griffiths as “a brilliant teacher with an interactive style that engaged students”. Colin was also a founder member of The Breakfast Club, which met each morning in Plymouth’s Isaac’s café, and boasted a number of members including Professor Griffiths.

He was well known for his appreciation of malt whisky, a love of science fiction literature, and a devotion to his family – wife Deb, son Brandon, and daughter Tanith.

Professor Mary Watkins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Colin’s long-standing colleague and manager, said: “Colin was a great character and a trusted friend to many, and we will miss his ever-cheerful demeanour and eloquent contribution to debate. Colin helped shape Plymouth University and enabled people across the South West to realise their talents though higher education; we will strive to build upon his legacy.”

The deadline for editorial submissions is MAY 12, 2012
Please contact Andrew Merrington on 01752 588003; andrew.merrington@plymouth.ac.uk

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